

V N^o 3
Gratitude to Benefactors,

Recommended in a

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

The P A R I S H - C H U R C H
of *Milton* next to *Gravesend*
in *Kent*;

On *Sunday* the 23d day of *May*, 1731.

O N

Occasion of the late Act of Parlia-
ment for rebuilding the Parish-
Church of *Gravesend*.

By JAMES HOW, A. M. K
Rector of *Milton*, and of *St. Margaret*
Lothbury in *London*.

L O N D O N :

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Grants to Benefactors

Printed in A

MEMORIAL

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TO
Anthony Ireland Esq;
M A Y O R,
AND TO
The jurats, and principal inhabitants of the town corporate of Gravesend and Milton.

GENTLEMEN,



HAD determin'd the publication of the following sermon, before I receiv'd the least intimation it wou'd be agreeable to you. But 'tis with

the greater pleasure that I do it at the request of the worshipful the mayor, in conformity to your sentiments; not only for the honour you have conferr'd on me hereby, but also the just occasion it has given me of publishing the grateful sense you have of the late act pass'd in your favour.

THE weak insinuation, that the Government were oblig'd to build you a church, because you pay the coal-duty in an equal proportion with the city of *London* (which has been industriously spread, on purpose to eclipse the royal bounty, and detract from the merit of those gentlemen who were the great instruments of procuring it) I am persuaded has had no ill effect upon you. Or was it possible that any of you cou'd be misled by it, (which I by no means suspect) I wou'd refer

fer you to the worshipful the mayor, who has been conversant with every circumstance relating to the affair, and discharg'd the trust you so laudably repos'd in him with the greatest honour and success.

HE is throughly appriz'd of the peculiar generosity of the act, and will on all occasions confess it; and I doubt not you, who have been so forward to assist him, in conjunction with the parish, will be as ready to testify the obligations you are under to him, by whose industry, and care to put your application in a right posture, you so happily succeeded.

THAT you may never want the like favour, and yet always obtain what you want, continue to distinguish yourselves by the steadiest loyalty

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loyalty to your Prince, his most
excellent majesty king GEORGE,
and duty to his royal consort, our
most gracious queen CAROLINE,
and be ever distinguish'd by them,
is the affectionate desire of,

Gentlemen,

Your most sincere

humble servant,

JAMES HOW.



LUKE



LUKE VII. 5.

*For he loveth our nation, and he
hath built us a synagogue.*



OUR blessed Saviour having finish'd his most excellent discourse in the preceding chapter, went down towards *Capernaum*, and as he was entring into the city, there met him several of the elders of the *Jews*, (i. e.) of the principal men of the town, to desire him to heal an eminent centurion's servant, then very dangerously ill; for the centurion had heard the fame of *Jesus's* miracles, and the servant that was sick was one he greatly valu'd, for which reason, he sent men of the best repute to pray the favour of him: When therefore these men met *Jesus*, they earnestly pressed him, saying, the
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centurion who desired this favour of him was a very worthy person, not only dignified by a considerable post of command and authority amongst them, but a very pious and devout man, and tho a *Roman* and a soldier, one that had a great veneration for their country and religion, for *he had built them a synagogue.*

WHAT I intend to discourse on more particularly, is the character here given of the centurion, that he was a lover of their country, which was very conspicuous by a remarkable act of goodness and generosity to them, in building them a synagogue. *For he loveth our nation, and therefore he hath built us a synagogue.*

BUT first it will be necessary to shew what is meant by *synagogue*, on which the main stress of the proof lies ; by which it will appear, he bore not only a common concern and respect for their nation, but that he had a particular affection for it, especially for their religious liberties, the most valuable privileges of any nation ; that he had, in short, the interest both of church and state very much at heart.

AND here I must observe, that the word *synagogue* is from the *Greek*, which signifies to gather together, and it is applicable to
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all things whereof there may be a collection; but more particularly and commonly it is meant of places dedicated to the worship of God, wherein it was lawful to pray, preach and dispute, but not to sacrifice. Amongst the *Hebrews* it was called the house of assembly. The temple at *Jerusalem* was the cathedral-church; the synagogues were petty parish-churches belonging to it; of which there was a great number, not only, tho more especially, at *Jerusalem*, their capital, but in other cities and provinces, *Galilee*, *Damascus*, *Salamis*, *Antiochia*, which are particularly mention'd in the New Testament.

IT is not material to fix the time when these synagogues were first erected. *Godwyn* thinks it probable they began when the tribes were settled in the promis'd land; the temple being then too far distant from those who dwelt in remote places, 'tis likely they repaired to these synagogues: 'Tis certain they are very antient, were in *David's* time, and *Moses of old had in every city them that preach'd him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.* They were built to worship in, for the more convenient attendance on divine service. Of this nature was the house, or *synagogue*, the centurion erected for them
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at his own charge, which he was not obliged to, I mean in point of strict justice ; for if he was determined to lay out any considerable part of his substance in acts of benevolence and generosity, he might have applied it to other pious uses, and singled out what persons he pleas'd to have been the objects of them, which might be urged as a proof of his particular regard for them : But forasmuch as they might have many things to plead in their behalf, to entitle them to his more especial care and protection, superior to any other part of the *Jewish* nation, which might render his bounty, if he was dispos'd to grant such an extraordinary favour as a synagogue, more peculiarly their right, I shall not insist on this ; but ground my proof on a more certain and substantial argument, *viz.* on the great advantages resulting from the publick worship of God ; by which it will be very clear, that not the centurion only, but every person, who is so piously dispos'd, is a true lover of his nation, has the interest and welfare of it, the most important interest of it, very much at heart.

THE great advantage of publick worship, by which I mean, assembling ourselves together in a publick manner to pay our homage to the supreme being, to
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ascribe to him the glory that is justly due to his infinite perfections, to pray to him for the continuance and increase of his favours, and to render him thanks for the daily supplies of his providence, and the many excellent benefits he has conferr'd on us: the great advantage, I say, of this sort of worship is, that it tends to keep up a sense of religion in the world, and make men virtuous, by impressing their minds with more solemn and awful conceptions of the divine being, the great creator and governor of the world, of his most glorious perfections; by giving them a better notion of the relation they stand in to him, and the obligations they are under to love, honour and obey him, and of the enforcements of virtue; by publicly exposing vice and corruption; and lastly, by laying men under an additional obligation in point of honour to be religious, who may justly be ashamed to contradict in private, what they pretend so solemnly to profess in publick.

AND the great advantage of religion and virtue to any nation is, that 'tis the best security of it in the world; not only providential, but natural security.

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curity. It not only entitles it to the more particular care and protection of divine providence, but in the reason and nature of things, it more effectually promotes its happiness, than any other thing can do, by striking at the root and foundation of all the immorality and disorder there is in it. It lays men's turbulent and boisterous passions, it instructs them to behave well in society, to live soberly and peaceably, and to practise all the social virtues, charity, mercy, justice, truth, on which both the present and future happiness of mankind, in all its branches, doth most truly and naturally depend. It puts an effectual stop to all the mischiefs which arise from a different conduct, to all acts of cruelty, malice and revenge, to all injustice, rapine and oppression, and to all animosities, discords and contentions, which are the most destructive evils that can happen. For * *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand*; and † *where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work*. They therefore who are so religiously dispos'd, with the centurion to erect synagogues in a nation, for the

* Mark iii. 24.

† James iii. 16.

due performance of publick worship, which is so great a friend to religion and virtue, when rightly carried on, are most sincere lovers of their country, and the greatest benefactors to mankind,

THAT some have assembled together at any time to impose on others false or superstitious notions of religion, to fast for strife and debate, to create jealousies and factions, to sow the seeds of discontent and rebellion; that some, I say, have so scandalously profan'd the temple of the Lord by their unhallow'd sacrifices, and shamefully abus'd the good and pious intentions of their benefactors, doth neither destroy the usefulness of synagogues, nor detract from the merit of the founders of them: Their design is well meant, and rightly judged to do good, to promote the virtue and happiness of their fellow-creatures; wherefore even they, who have deemed publick worship to be a political thing only, and not of divine institution, as friends to the common interest of mankind, have thought it highly prudential to encourage it.

THE world is very much corrupted, every one knows, notwithstanding all the means that are us'd to reform it ; but if religion, which is undoubtedly a personal thing, rightly consider'd, was practis'd only in private betwixt God and a man's self, and not encourag'd in publick by way of motive and example to others to exercise it in private, we shou'd soon lamentably perceive its degeneracy much increase, and vice, which is now asham'd to hold up its head in many places, where the publick worship of God is regularly administred, and people are instructed in the true principles of religion, and the proper enforcements of it, grow much bolder, and more impudent than it is. Considering therefore, I say, what a detriment vice, and what advantage virtue is to society, for there can be no greater of either sort, and what an influence our publick devotions have upon them, in promoting the one and reforming the other, they who are friends to them, especially in so generous a manner, as by erecting churches or synagogues for this purpose, for the more decent and convenient discharge of them, must be sincere lovers of their nation,

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of its trueſt intereſt and welfare, which theſe have ſo direct a tendency to promote. *For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a ſynagogue.*

I DON'T want you to apply this, tho I ſuſpect you have done it already, to the preſent moſt excellent prince who ſits upon the throne, who has built you a ſynagogue. It wou'd be ridiculous in me, and a reflection on his moſt ſacred majeſty, thus to labour his glorious character, or to hinge the paternal love he bears this nation on this ſingle act of his great liberality and goodneſs towards you; when you remember ſo remarkable an inſtance of it*, which he and his royal confort were pleas'd ſo lately and opportunely to ſhew you under your great miſfortunes, at a time when the beſt part of your dwellings was reduced to aſhes, and your ſubſtance conſum'd by almoſt a general conflagration, and which had the happy effect on well-diſpos'd minds, that might juſtly be expected from ſo noble an example, by encouraging one of the largeſt contributions towards repairing your

* His majeſty gave 1000 l. and the queen 500 l. to the ſufferers by the fire.

losses that was ever rais'd on the like occasion ; and when the whole series of his illustrious actions ever since he wore the crown, have been one continued demonstration of his extraordinary zeal and steadiness in this point. However, it ought never to be forgot, with what chearfulness he embrac'd this opportunity of expressing publicly his affection for you. He was most certainly the fountain from whence this generous benefaction sprung, and you will readily agree with me, you cannot be too grateful in your acknowledgments of it ; by distinguishing yourselves most zealously in favour of his royal person and government, in opposition to those who maliciously delight in raising a spirit of discontent and sedition, by unjust clamours and misrepresentations ; and endeavouring most heartily, where you have the least influence, to remove all groundless jealousies and apprehensions, and propagate a spirit of loyalty amongst your fellow-subjects. — There are others, very worthy persons, to whom you are highly oblig'd for soliciting the royal bounty. I cou'd name several, and *one* particularly, did it not look too much like flattery to do it ; however, you cannot be ignorant of whom I speak,
with

with what sincerity he prosecuted the design, and how happily he accomplish'd it. No sooner did this worthy *patriot* appear in it, but his character and interest with his royal master vanquish'd every opposition, and procur'd an *act*, unexpected, unpresidented, in your favour. Your case, I confess, was somewhat peculiar, and attended with circumstances that are not common, to move the compassion of a prince, who is both by nature and principle form'd with all the tender sentiments of love and affection for his people: Yet, if you consider the difficulties of a proper application, and how many excellent undertakings prove abortive for want of it, you must ever remember the signal service he has done you with the utmost gratitude and respect.

EVERY virtue is beautiful in its kind, but the virtue which is stil'd benevolence, and is the peculiar property of him, who is, by way of eminence, call'd *the good man*, is the most excellent and useful of all virtues. * *Tho I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, by which is meant*

1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c.

this

this universal good-will and benevolence to mankind, *I am become as sounding-brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and tho I have the gift of prophecies, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and tho I have all faith, so that I cou'd remove mountains; tho I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burn'd, and have not charity, I am nothing.* There is faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of these is charity. * Scarcely for a righteous man will one dye, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to dye. The righteous man is undoubtedly a very useful deserving character, (*i. e.*) the man who abstains from all injuries to others, is inoffensive in his behaviour, and renders to every one his just due. But yet the man who barely discharges his just debts, and only refrains from wrongs and abuses, which it wou'd be monstrous to commit, is not so deserving of esteem as the good and beneficent man. Such an one is more eminently virtuous in *himself*; many men are very punctual to their engagements, and detest all fraudulent unrighteous dealings, scorn to do the least injury to any, who, as if they

Rom. v. 7.

thought

thought themselves oblig'd no further, never discover one act of kindness and generosity to others. But he is not only just, but good; just he is to the greatest nicety, and most tender of every one's rights: but beside this, he is kind and compassionate, affectionate as well as kind, and generous beyond what the rules of strict friendship require of him. He has greatly the superiority of every other person in point of a more extensive virtue, and has the fairest title to the most honourable character, and highest encomiums. He is an example of the noblest virtue, not only a patron of the distress'd, but every man's friend, the best of *patriots*, and a common father of his country. *For such a one peradventure some wou'd even dare to dye,* rather than mankind shou'd be untimely depriv'd of such an inestimable blessing. Modestly speaking, no one will offer him the least affront or indecency, but downright prostitutes, or they, who having shamefully abandon'd all sense of religion and virtue, all concern for their own happiness, and the happiness of others, are determin'd right or wrong at all adventures, inhumanly, ungratefully, to sacrifice the most valuable interest to their barbarous resentments, incorrigible

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obstinacy

obstinacy and pride. There is not, cannot be a more amiable character in life. If God himself, the most kind and beneficent of all beings, is to be honour'd and loved, they who so much resemble him deserve it, tho in an inferior degree. And this some of the heathens were so sensible of, that being animated by an extraordinary love for their country, they voluntarily offer'd to suffer death in their stead. And if men are not quite degenerated into brutes, divested of all sense of goodness, and true merit, they must entertain a very great opinion of them.

MORE especially are they worthy of double honour, who so strenuously engaged in your cause, and were the happy instruments, with their great and royal master, of building a synagogue for you. This, if we consider it in all its circumstances, relations and consequences, was the greatest act of benevolence they were capable of shewing you ; and none have a more undoubted right to all the praise you can give them.

YOUR most gracious sovereign has
a most watchful eye over the welfare
and

and interest of all his subjects, and is never more happy than when he can contribute to the happiness of his people. And did not some other very honourable persons maturely weigh the difficulties of your case, represent it in a proper manner with all its melancholy circumstances, and procure the royal assent? You are chiefly indebted to God and your king; but your more immediate benefactors were they, who employ'd their pains and interest for your sake. And I doubt not, but you will constantly bear in your minds a most grateful sense of the great and distinguishing favour, which he has conferr'd on you, *by whom kings reign*, and of the kind protection and encouragement you have found from *his majesty's* most gracious administration, that you will cheerfully *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's; honour to whom honour is due, and owe no man any thing*, who has us'd any endeavours to serve you; but discharge your obligations to them by *loving one another*, by a most affectionate concern for their interest and service, whenever there is occasion.

FINALLY,

FINALLY, *nothing* I hope will be done thro' strife and vain-glory, and no unnecessary difficulties rais'd, whereby the charitable undertaking, so happily begun, will be retarded, *but in lowliness of mind, each esteeming other better than himself*, you will go hand in hand, harmoniously contributing every one according to his capacity, in the station he is in, his utmost endeavours, till the whole is successfully accomplished. And the God of heaven bless your labours, preserve and keep you both in body and soul, thro' *Jesus Christ* our Lord, to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



